



**Strengthening Families Self-Assessment for the Department of Human Resources
United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta**

**Submitted by the
Black Child Development Institute, Atlanta Affiliate**

Strengthening Families Self-Assessment for the Department of Human Resources United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta

Background

The United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta (UWMA) received funding to integrate the *Strengthening Families* (SF) approach and Protective Factors framework into various organizational contexts and to expand the SF approach to its network of grantees and partners that impact families with children ages 0-5. The *Strengthening Families United* Project was designed to meet the following six goals:

1. To increase awareness of the Protective Factors among all staff within UWMA.
2. To increase understanding of the alignment/misalignment of UWMA human resources policies and practices with SF Protective Factors and a commitment to address such.
3. To enhance integration of SF Protective Factors within early childhood related strategies and funding requirements.
4. To increase understanding of SF Protective Factors among UWMA grantees in areas related to early childhood.
5. To demonstrate integration of SF Protective Factors in early learning settings that are a part of the Early Learning Community Based Partnership and T/TA.
6. To develop a set of tools that can be used by the Georgia SF Leadership Team to broaden awareness and integration throughout Georgia.

The Strengthening Families Approach

When children grow and learn in loving and caring environments, they can do better in school and are more prepared for the future. Yet even the best parents need help to give their children the greatest chance at success and reduce the chances of child maltreatment.

The Center for the Study of Social Policy conducted extensive research that resulted in shifting the focus about child abuse and neglect prevention to strengthening families as a way of reaching families before a risk of child abuse or neglect occurs. The *Strengthening Families* approach is based in the identification of five “Protective Factors” that reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect, and increase the likelihood of optimal child development, when they are present and robust in a family. Over the last several years, over 35 states—including Georgia—and numerous national organizations have adopted Strengthening Families initiatives.

The Strengthening Families Protective Factors

There are five Strengthening Families Protective Factors:

1. **Parental Resilience:** Parents maintain a positive attitude and have the ability to cope with, creatively

solve, and bounce back from different life challenges.

2. **Social Connections:** Parents have a network of people, agencies, and organizations that provide emotional support and concrete assistance.
3. **Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development:** Parents understand what to expect at different stages of child development, effective parenting skills, and ways of finding help with specific developmental or behavioral problems.
4. **Concrete Supports in Times of Need:** Parents have access to formal and informal services and support from social networks in times of family crisis.
5. **Social and Emotional Development:** Parents work with children to help them learn to interact positively with others, communicate their emotions, and feel good about themselves.

Strategies to Build the Protective Factors

All child and family serving professionals can work to build the SF protective factors in families they serve by using the strategies below. In addition, the agencies that employ these professionals can work to build the protective factors among their employees using the same seven strategies, adapted to fit the agency or departmental context.

- Facilitate friendships and mutual support
- Strengthen parenting
- Respond to family crises
- Link families to services and opportunities
- Observe and respond to early warning signs of child abuse or neglect
- Facilitate children’s social and emotional development
- Value and nurture parents

The Strengthening Families United Project

The basic premise of the *Strengthening Families United* Project is that by integrating the Protective Factors within the organizational context of the UWMA, employees will function more effectively in their jobs and in their families.

The Human Resources SF Self-Assessment

The Strengthening Families Self-Assessment for the United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta Department of Human Resources (HR) is developed for UWMA employees to assess if HR practices help to build the Strengthening Families Protective Factors. The HR self-assessment is organized around the seven strategies listed above but relevant adaptations have been made to fit the UWMA Human Resources context. Thus, the strategies “Facilitate children’s social and emotional development” and “Value and nurture parents” have been subsumed under the category “Strengthen parenting.” The HR self-assessment takes 10-15 minutes to complete.

Strengthening Families Self-Assessment for the Department of Human Resources United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta

STRATEGY 1: FACILITATE A RESPECTFUL WORK ENVIRONMENT AND MUTUAL SUPPORT

Check Only One

Facilitate a Respectful Work Environment and Mutual Support	5: Strongly Agree	4: Agree	3: Neither Agree nor Disagree	2: Disagree	1: Strongly Disagree	Comments
1. A comfortable space(s) is available for employees to meet informally.						
2. There are opportunities for employees to establish formal and informal internal support mechanisms, such as job-related training/technical assistance (e.g., computer skills), car pools, babysitting co-ops, etc.						
3. There are opportunities for employees with similar interests (e.g., recreational, books, crafts, technology) to connect.						
4. There are opportunities for employees with similar family life circumstances to connect (e.g., young children, aging parents).						
5. There are opportunities for employees to socialize and foster a sense of community.						
6. Information is made available about social, educational, civic, family, and volunteer activities and events.						
7. Information about special events, contributions, and accomplishments of employees and their families is shared within the work community (e.g., birthdays, graduations).						
8. There are opportunities to learn about and celebrate the cultural backgrounds and customs of employees.						
9. There are opportunities for the families of employees to gather together in a social context.						
10. Information is made available about agency, state, and national policies that impact employees (e.g., health care reform, social security revisions) via printed materials or presentations.						
11. Information is made available about matters that impact all employees (e.g., health, financial planning) via such formats as printed materials, presentations, or "Lunch and Learn forums."						
12. Information is made available about matters that impact employees with unique needs (e.g., disabilities) via printed materials, presentations, or "Lunch and Learn forums."						

STRATEGY 2: STRENGTHEN PARENTING AND OTHER ADULT FAMILY ROLES

Check Only One

Strengthen Parenting and Other Adult Family Roles	5: Strongly Agree	4: Agree	3: Neither Agree nor Disagree	2: Disagree	1: Strongly Disagree	Comments
1. Information is available for employees on various parenting concerns (e.g., toilet training, disciplining adolescents, alternate forms of punishment, appropriate developmental expectations, the value of social and emotional development in children).						
2. Information is available for employees on family concerns not related to parenting (e.g., Alzheimer's disease, dealing with family tragedies, home buying).						
3. There are opportunities for employees with similar parenting or other family concerns to come together and share (e.g., the impact of children with special needs on family dynamics, living with aging parents, grand-parenting, fatherhood).						
4. Information about parenting or other family concerns is available in different languages.						
5. Information about parenting or other family concerns is available in different formats (e.g., printed materials, DVDs).						
6. Information about parenting or other family concerns is available about diverse family constellations such as single parents, foster parents, and gay/lesbian couples.						
7. There are opportunities for employees to be referred/connected to resources and supports to strengthen relationships between adults (e.g., healthy marriages, communication skills for couples, co-parenting).						
8. There are opportunities for employees to be referred/connected to resources and supports to address challenging parenting concerns (e.g., difficult child temperaments, recognizing and addressing attention deficit hyperactivity disorder).						
9. There are opportunities for employees to be referred/connected to resources and supports related to healthy child development.						
10. There are opportunities for experts in various family matters to make presentations to and dialogue with employees.						
11. There are opportunities for employees to identify family-related topics for which information, resources, and supports are needed.						
12. The work environment is supportive of parenting and family needs (e.g., on-site childcare services, lactation room, family resource library, confidential referral services).						

STRATEGY 3: RESPOND TO EMPLOYEE AND FAMILY CRISES

Check Only One

Respond to Employee and Family Crises	5: Strongly Agree	4: Agree	3: Neither Agree nor Disagree	2: Disagree	1: Strongly Disagree	Comments
1. The message is conveyed to employees that their place of employment is one of care and concern in times of personal or family crisis.						
2. Employees receive information on which departments/units/staff within the agency can help with various matters in times of need.						
3. There are opportunities for employees to be referred/connected to relevant resources and supports outside of the agency in times of need (e.g., domestic violence, respite care for children, mental health services, alcohol and substance abuse services, legal assistance).						
4. Employees are assured of confidentiality when discussing personal or family crises and other matters with agency staff.						
5. Employees are informed of the limits of confidentiality when discussing certain matters with agency staff.						
6. Up-to-date information about various services, supports, and resources is maintained.						
7. Employees are made aware of how to access information about various services, supports, and resources.						
8. Relevant staff receive training in employee conflict resolution.						
9. Relevant staff receive training in talking with employees about difficult issues.						
10. Relevant staff receive training in recognizing such issues as domestic violence, depression, substance abuse, and other signs of imminent crises.						
11. Relevant staff receive training in helping employees make immediate and long-term plans to address various crises.						
12. Relevant staff proactively respond to signs of employee distress.						
13. Collaborative linkages have been established with various crisis intervention services.						
14. There are agency-sponsored or agency-encouraged opportunities for employees to relieve stress, such as exercise classes, yoga classes, and/or a wellness program.						

STRATEGY 4: LINK EMPLOYEES TO SERVICES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Check Only One

Link Employees to Services and Opportunities	5: Strongly Agree	4: Agree	3: Neither Agree nor Disagree	2: Disagree	1: Strongly Disagree	Comments
1. Information is made available about opportunities within the agency for employees to enhance their talents and skills and continue their learning.						
2. Information is made available about opportunities outside of the agency for employees to enhance their talents and skills and continue their learning.						
3. Employees have an opportunity to identify topics and areas of personal growth and learning for which information, resources, and supports are needed.						
4. Collaborative linkages have been established with services, organizations, or institutions that promote continued personal growth and development (e.g., educational and training institutions that offer distant learning/online courses).						
5. Collaborative linkages have been established with services, organizations, or institutions that promote family enrichment (e.g., libraries, recreational programs, museums, volunteer agencies).						
6. The message is conveyed to employees that their place of employment values lifelong learning.						
7. The message is conveyed to employees that their place of employment encourages staff to seek opportunities for personal growth and development.						
8. There are opportunities for employees to share talents, skills, and cultural traditions with other employees.						
9. The agency recognizes employee contributions and achievements.						

STRATEGY 5: RECOGNIZE AND RESPOND TO EARLY WARNING SIGNS OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT AND OTHER FORMS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

Check Only One

Recognize and Respond to Early Warning Signs of Child Abuse and Neglect and Other Forms of Family Violence	5: Strongly Agree	4: Agree	3: Neither Agree nor Disagree	2: Disagree	1: Strongly Disagree	Comments
1. There are training opportunities for employees to learn about the Strengthening Families approach and the Protective Factors framework.						
2. Printed, AV, and/or electronic materials are made available for employees about the Strengthening Families approach and the Protective Factors framework.						
3. There is a physical space that serves as a Strengthening Families resource center.						
4. There are training opportunities for employees to learn about child abuse and neglect in general (e.g., types, incidence, what constitutes child abuse and neglect in the state, prevention and intervention services, the state's child welfare reporting guidelines).						
5. There are training opportunities for employees to learn about other forms of family violence (e.g., types, incidence, prevention and intervention services).						
6. There are training opportunities for employees to learn about recognizing the early signs of child abuse and neglect.						
7. There are training opportunities for employees to learn about recognizing the early signs of other forms of family violence.						
8. Relevant staff receive training in broaching the topic of suspected child abuse and neglect, and other forms of family violence, with colleagues.						
9. Relevant staff receive training in the appropriate course of action if a colleague reveals being a perpetrator or victim of child abuse and neglect or other forms of family violence.						
10. Information is made available to employees about suitable respite care and/or emergency crisis services for child abuse and neglect and other forms of family violence.						
11. Employees are made aware of relevant staff's status and responsibilities as mandated reporters (if applicable), and the agency's protocols for reporting suspected child abuse and neglect (if applicable).						